



GUIDE TO
THE BOROUGH OF
THETFORD.

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1908, as the

“Borough Official Guide.”

THETFORD.



SPRING WALK, THESTON.

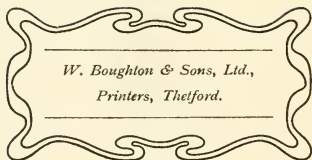
A Short Historical Guide to the
Ancient Borough of Thetford,
In the Counties of Norfolk and Suffolk.



By W. G. Clarke.

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1908.



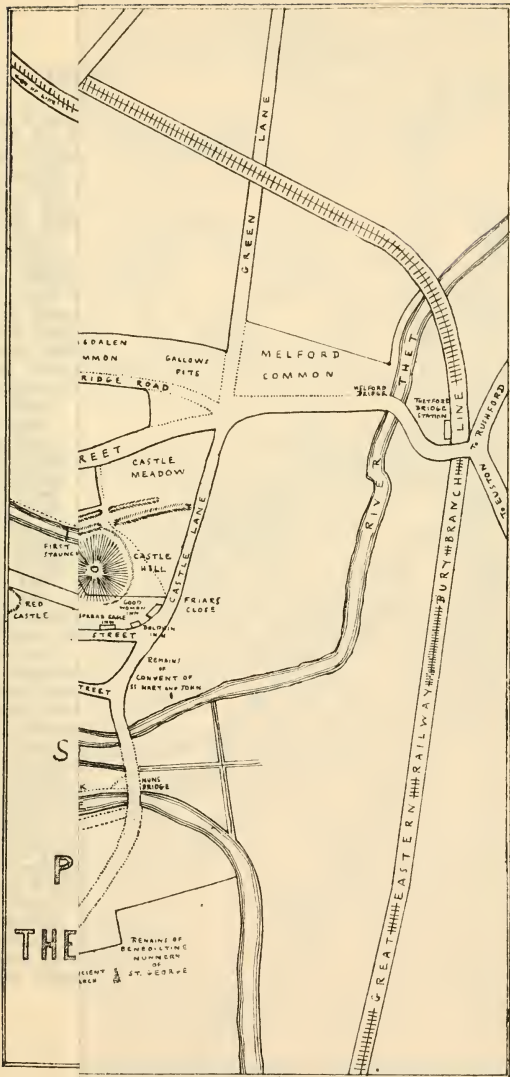
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PREFATORY NOTE.

Englishmen are, year by year, learning more of the beauties and historical associations of the less-known portions of their own country, and with the increased travelling facilities afforded by cycles and motor-cars, the wild heathland district of which Thetford is the centre, has come in for a wider share of public appreciation. In many respects it is unique, and with Thetford easily accessible by road and rail, furnished with good inns, and shops sufficient to satisfy all the needs of the average tourist, it is possible to enjoy a country holiday without being out of touch with the advantages of civilisation. The publishers and author of this guide trust that it will give strangers to the Borough of Thetford an outline of its chief attractions, at the same time providing residents with a handy and accurate account of the chief features of interest in the town at the present day, and their connection with "the past's enormous disarray."

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NORFOLK

ASSET
NOTE

TOWN OF
LOUTH
PRIORY
OF
MARE

WATER MEADOWS

BEAUFORT ROAD

SUFFOLK

PLAN
OF
THETFORD.

1906.

W.D.C.

1894. TEST

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BRECKLAND.

The sandy heaths where rabbits dwell,
The far-flung belts where pines do sing,
The plover's pipe, the ring-dove's coo,
The curlew whistling on the wing,
The purple robe in autumn spread
O'er waste and wild, with heather bright,
Are gifts disbursed by Nature's hand
To give her children pure delight.

The scent of pines and clustered thyme,
The tawny bents and slopes of sand,
The placid meres with water-fowl,
Are charms of thine, beloved land.
And in thy midst, around the fords,
Where Ouse and Thet their streams unite,
There stands a town of great renown,
Founded of yore by men of might.

Its rugged ruins and winding streets,
Its trackways old that come from far,
Its ancient inns and royal homes
A part of its delights still are;
Its shady walks on Ouse's banks,
The mighty hill, for aye the same,
Make it beloved of all who come,
And they in turn extend its fame.

W.G.C.



SPRING WALKS, THE FORD.



THE MILL HEAD, THERYORE

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CHAPTER I.

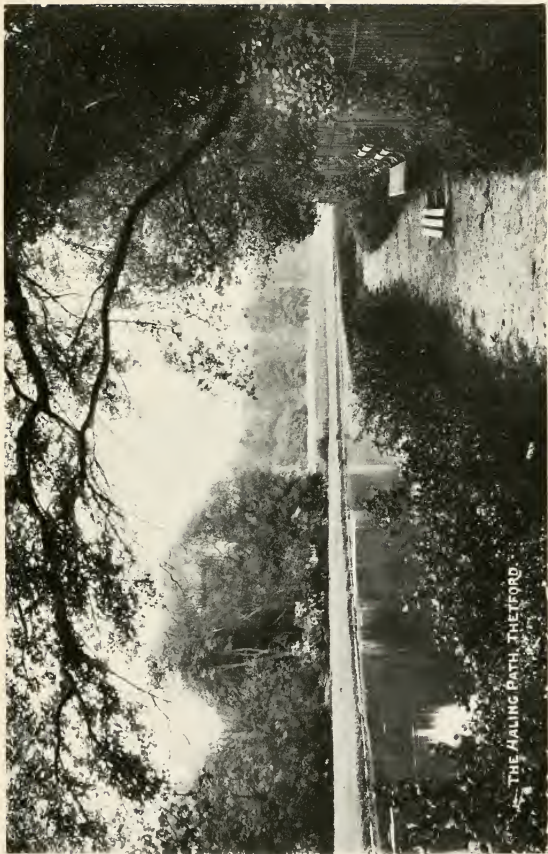
INTRODUCES THE READER TO THE ANCIENT TOWN OF THETFORD
AND THE COUNTRY ADJACENT THERETO.

The parts of south-west Norfolk and north-west Suffolk contiguous to the Borough of Thetford have many characteristic charms. Within a radius of ten miles of Thetford the greater proportion of the country consists of open heathland, "brecks" enclosed by sombre fir "belts," or large sandy fields. The town itself lies in a hollow at the junction of the rivers Little Ouse and Thet, the former being the boundary between Norfolk and Suffolk. Near the town is a small cultivated area, but beyond is a belt of the wildest and least populated land in East Anglia, with many square miles uncultivated and unenclosed, a sweet and bracing air of the utmost purity, described by the Hon. Roger North in the 17th century as "most excellent" for health, and a soil clean and light as the seashore sand, and even more absorbent. In some parts it is possible to walk eight or ten miles without seeing more than one or two houses, and probably half the mileage of the highways and byways of the district is unbounded by hedge or bank. There is a consequent

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freedom of vision rarely found in the Eastern Counties, a wide expanse of sky, with a wind sweeping over miles of heathland and bringing fragrance of thyme and bracken, heather and fir, and more rarely the subtle aroma of the heath-grass.* These sandy heaths and warrens are beautiful at any season of the year, but more especially in late summer, when the royal purple of the heather, the tawny bents, and the big tracts of bracken, give grace and colour to a somewhat sterile land. Some heaths appear as though immutability had been their lot since Neolithic hunters roamed the winding trackways, threw up earthen banks which puzzle the antiquary, or raised grave-mounds over the bodies of departed chieftains. But Breckland—as the district is called, from the number of “brecks” or once-cultivated areas which now lie fallow—is not all heath. There are meandering streams bordered by meadowland with lush grass; avenues of arched foliage; a tongue of the Fenland reaching to Brandon; towns and villages of old-world aspect; halls and churches of historic interest; with peculiarities of wild life and scenery that have an abiding fascination for those who delight in a locality little influenced by the currents of modernity.

Undoubtedly the most remarkable feature of the natural history of the district is the occurrence of birds, a sedge, two or three grasses, and other plants, and many insects, usually associated with the sea-coast. The ringed plover is the only shore-bird that nests hereabouts, breeding, though not abundantly, on certain heaths and warrens, most



THE HALING PATH, THE FORD.



MILL HEAD, THETFORD.

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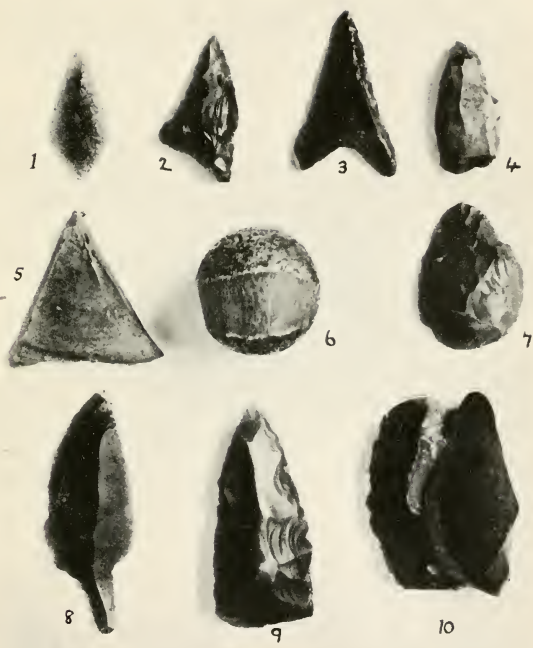
of which would have bordered an arm of the sea extending up the Little Ouse valley from the Fenland in the post-glacial epoch. Local conditions are also favourable to rarities in almost every branch of natural history, the habitat of several insects and plants being practically confined to a few heaths near Thetford. Rabbits are extremely abundant, and form the chief "crop" on some of the farms in the neighbourhood. For those species of birds which are not suspected of being inimical to game the district is a very paradise, its spring and summer residents including an unusually large number of breeding birds. Within a six-mile radius of Thetford, 195 species of birds have been identified, and of these 103 have been known to breed in the locality. On the local warrens lived the last of the indigenous race of great bustards, and they are still the chief British stronghold of the stone curlew, whose shrill whistle is one of the most characteristic sounds of the Breckland summer. Nightjars and green woodpeckers are also typical birds, and for the preservation of game it is still admitted to be one of the best districts in England.

Attractive both from their situation and their wild-life, are the meres of Wretham Heath and Park. One of the latter, Mickle Mere, is 48 acres in extent, and has a decoy of ten pipes, in which about 1,000 ducks are taken each year. The heathland meres are on the borders of Wretham and Croxton, the Drove Road passing between the Punch Bowl and Fowlmere, and Langmere and Ringmere. There are strange fluctuations in the water-level, and the meres

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occasionally dry up, the last time being from September, 1901, to October, 1903, when the bed of Fowlmere was cultivated, and yielded excellent crops. Punch Bowl, the smallest of the meres, has a crater-like shape; Fowlmere, the largest, lies in a shallow depression, partly bordered on the east by a fir-crowned bluff, and on the west by an amphitheatre of alders and willows; Langmere is weirdly lonesome, with a hill, on which flourish some ancient pines, almost dividing it into two parts; while Ringmere is a circular pool near the highway from Thetford to East Wretham. These meres are greatly beloved of wildfowl, and on them nest some of the rarest British-breeding ducks, including gadwall, garganey, mallard, pochard, shoveler, teal, and tufted duck.

Many thousands of years have elapsed since the district was first inhabited by human beings, and the valley of the Little Ouse is one of the classical sites for relics of Palæolithic man, although the excavations in which his flint tools and weapons have been found in great abundance are now overgrown. Of Neolithic flint implements, many thousands have been picked up from the surface of heaths and "brecks" or cultivated fields, and some of the most famous Neolithic flint-quarries in Europe are those at Grimes' Graves, Weeting, now visible only as about 250 depressions in a wood. The flint here found was very hard and black, and this accounts for the amazing abundance of implements in the district, as it appears probable that the flint was almost continuously worked during the 20,000 years in which the



NEOLITHIC FLINT IMPLEMENTS FOUND IN THETFORD DISTRICT.
(By permission of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.)



GREEN LANE

MILVERSON

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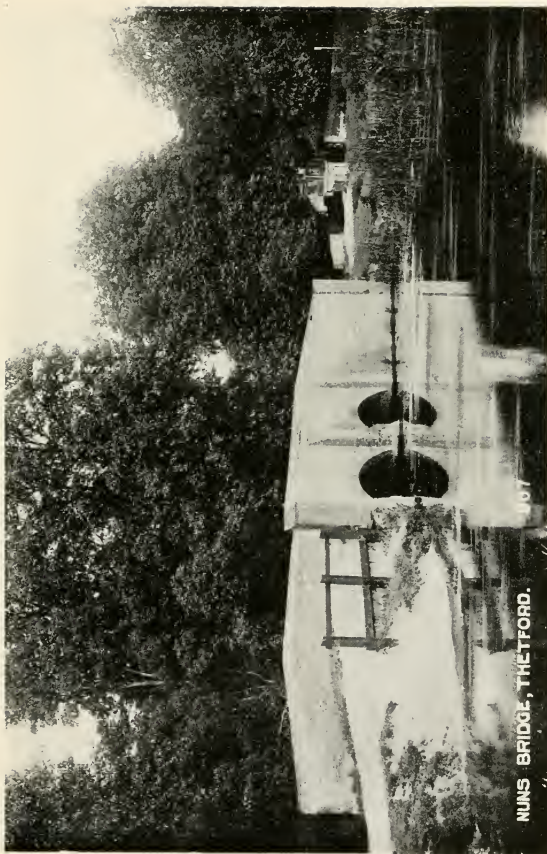
local tribes were in the Neolithic stage of culture. Practically all kinds of flint implements have been found, the chipping on some being superb. Polished implements, and those made of bronze, are, however, decidedly rare. To the Bronze Age probably belong the pile-dwellings found in Wretham West Mere in 1851 and Wretham Great Mere in 1856, with bones of the red deer and long-faced ox. There are a number of very fine barrows in the district, nearly all being prehistoric. Three local trackways in all likelihood date from the same period—Peddar's Way, which runs from Holme-next-the-Sea into Suffolk, and on Roudham and Brettenham Heaths is known as the "Ridge Road"; the "Drove," which begins at Hockwold, and joins Peddar's Way on Roudham Heath; and the Icknield Way, which connected Norfolk with the south-west of England. It crossed the highway between Elveden and Barnham at Marman's Grave, entered Thetford at the rear of the cemetery, and passed close by the gasworks to a spot known as "Chunk Harvey's Grave." By a sharp turn it then crossed the Little Ouse and Thet at the Nuns' Bridges, continued by Castle Lane, and left the town by Green Lane, after which its course is somewhat doubtful. While undoubtedly prehistoric, the Icknield Way was used by the Romans, and for over a thousand years was one of the chief roads into East Anglia.

With the general history of the district and the town of Thetford it is impossible to deal in a short guide. Concerning Thetford's importance in Saxon and Danish times, the

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ford from which the town derived its name, the great fights in the vicinity, the 947 burgesses in the reign of Edward the Confessor, the Jewish colony in the 12th century, and its period of comparative decay after the Dissolution, the student will find details in local histories.

The population of the town in 1901 was 4,613, the circumference of the borough 17 miles, and its area 7,298 acres.



NUNS BRIDGE, THETFORD.



SPRING WALKS, THETFORD.

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CHAPTER II.

A RAMBLE THROUGH THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF THETFORD, IN NORFOLK.

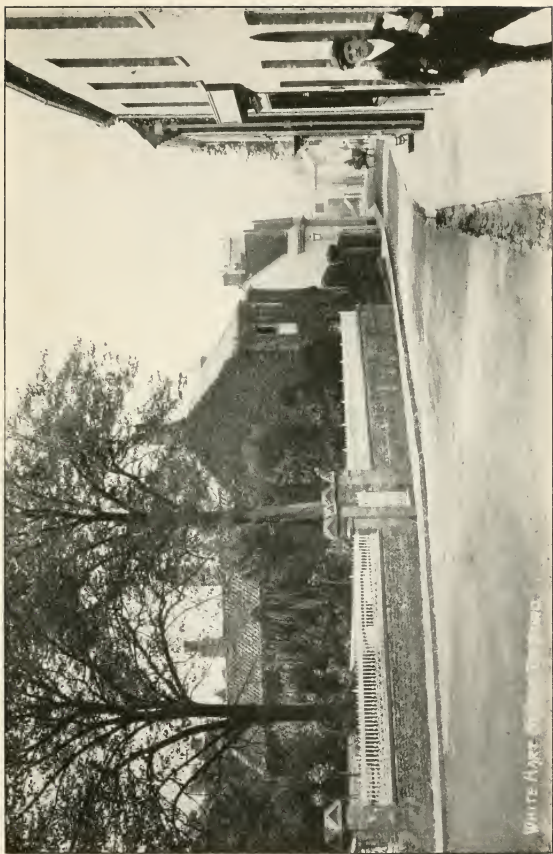
In order to view the chief places of interest in the town, which James Grigor describes in "The Eastern Arboretum" as "one of the most charming places in England," a start may conveniently be made from the railway station, which was erected in 1845, greatly enlarged in 1889, and is now the finest station between Ely and Norwich. The Cambridge main line of the G.E.R. here crosses the Mundford Road, by which less than half a mile distant are the municipal waterworks, opened in 1877. The spring when first struck, at a depth of $155\frac{1}{2}$ feet, yielded 14,000 gallons per hour of excellent water from the chalk. The well was subsequently sunk to 160 feet. Between the waterworks and the railway station the New Road connects the Mundford and Croxton Roads, and gives access to the fine Recreation Ground, leased to a number of trustees, and utilised by the youth of Thetford. At the town end of Station Road, which is a continuation of Mundford Road, a highway diverges northward to Croxton and Watton—on it being four almshouses erected by Mr. and Mrs. G. T. Tyrrell in 1885—and another

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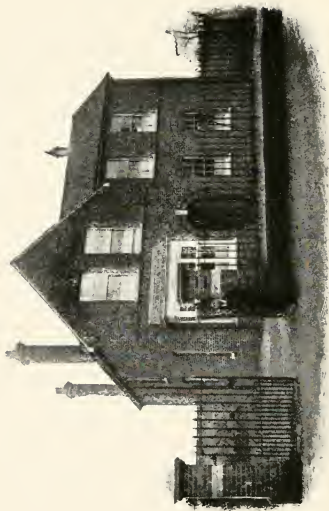
north-eastward to Norwich, passing the spacious elementary schools erected in 1878, and owned by the Norfolk County Council.

At the end of Station Road the street to the southward is White Hart Street, in which is situated the house in which Thomas Paine was born, the house which at the beginning of the last century was one of the thirteen theatres owned by the Fisher family of Norwich, and a fine half-timbered early 16th century building, excellently preserved, and showing the outline of an ancient watchman's box. Many of the houses in Thetford date from this and the beginning of the succeeding century, but have been refronted, and are therefore not so easy to distinguish. On the other side of the street is the "White Hart," which until 1846 was a famous coaching inn. The Household Accounts of the Le Stranges of Hunstanton contain entries of a visit in May, 1550, of Sir Nicholas le Strange and Eustace Rolfe his servant, with payments "to the wyffe of the Wyghte Harthe in Thetforde." One of the famous etchings of the late Edwin Edwards, whose father lived at Bridgham Hall, consists of a picture of the two entrance porches, with their fine ornamental ironwork; the sign is a wonderful White Hart; and the old shutters are pierced by white "hearts."

From Norwich Road, Grove Lane leads into Magdalen Street, at the northern end of which are almshouses for six poor men, built in 1680 from bequests by Sir Charles Harbord, Surveyor-General to Charles I., who endowed them for 99 years, and his son William, Member of Parlia-



WHITE HALL, N. H.



THE COTTAGE HOSPITAL, THETFORD.

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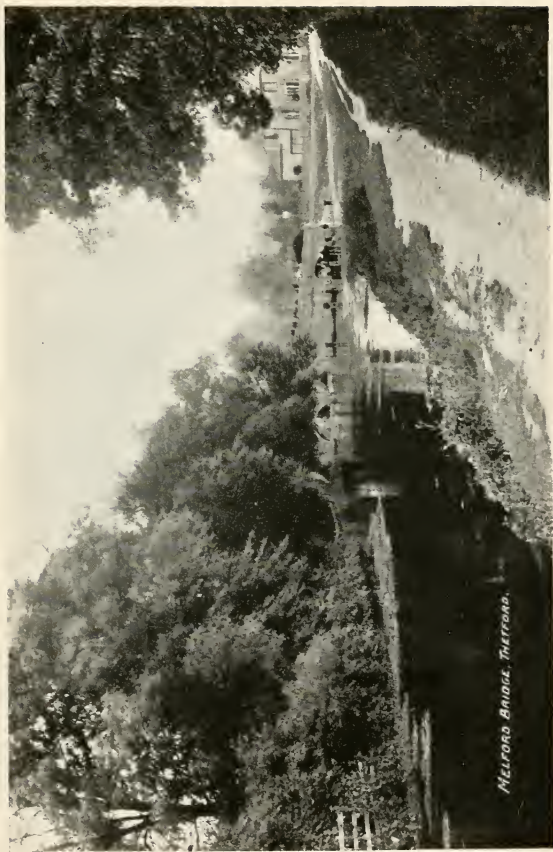
ment for the borough. At the south end of Magdalen Street, Earl Street—so named because the barns of the Earls Warren were situated here soon after the Norman Conquest—connects it with Station Road. Side by side in this street are the Congregational Church, the Oddfellows' Hall, and the Cottage Hospital. It is worthy of note that William Dennis, the first martyr of Independency, was put to death in the town in 1583, but the present Congregational Chapel was built in 1817 chiefly through the efforts of the Rev. C. Dewhirst, of Bury St. Edmund's. The Oddfellows' Hall was erected in 1891 by the Loyal "Phoenix" Lodge, M.U., at a cost of £1,500, and the Cottage Hospital in 1897 as a memorial of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The late Mr. T. S. Bidwell gave the site and erected the Hospital, and the townspeople furnished and partly endowed it.

The Market Place is a fine open space, dominated by the new Town Hall, adjoining which are the Mechanics' Institute and a covered market. The Institute was founded in 1841, and as a memorial of the Jubilee of the reign of Queen Victoria the present white-brick building was erected by subscription at a cost of £680, and was handed over to the Corporation the following year. In addition to a good library and reading room, there is a room for games, and another which contains a small collection of flint implements, fossils, &c. On the other side of the Market Place is the Post Office, a three-storey building of red brick, erected in 1895.

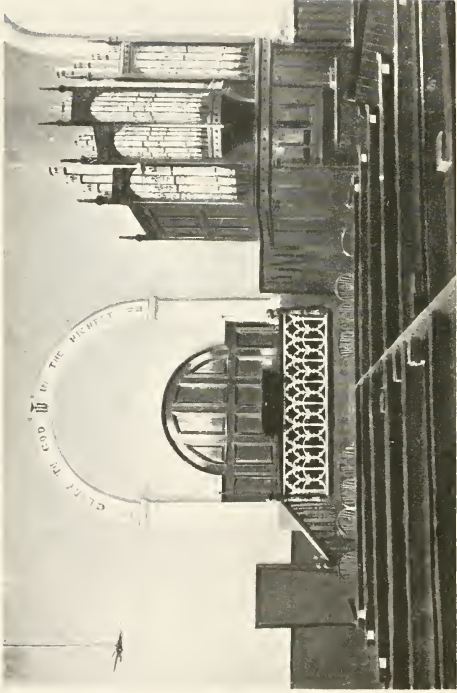
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Of the five streets leading from the Market Place the widest is Castle Street, which opens out on to Melford Common, where John Wesley is traditionally said to have preached on one of his visits to the town. Before reaching this, the Castle Meadow and earthworks are passed, and the roadway is bordered by an avenue of horse chestnuts and limes, planted as a reminder of the Coronation of King Edward VII., and leading to Melford Bridge, rebuilt by Sir John Wodehouse, as shown by a stone bearing his arms and the following inscription :—“ Hic pons sumptibus Johannis Wodehouse Bt. Extructus fuit A.D. 1697. Qui bono publico optime consuluit.”

Another of the streets leading from the Market Place is Guildhall Street, termed, until a few decades ago, “ Heathenman Street,” and possibly a philological survival of a thousand years, referring to the “ heathen men ” (Danes) of the “ Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.” Here stands the Primitive Methodist Chapel. A local preacher named John Kent may be taken as the virtual agent for the establishment of Primitive Methodism in the town about 1830, though the circuit did not receive legal independence until 1859, and the chapel was erected in 1863. Between the chapel and the Mechanics’ Institute is Cage Lane, in which formerly stood, in two iron-grated archways, the stocks and pillory erected in 1581. Adjoining is the ancient “ Quaker Chapel,” which was partly pulled down in 1907, after having been used by the Friends as a meeting-house from 1696 to 1865, and subsequently as a “ Citadel ” by the Salvation



MELFORD BRIDGE, THETFORD.



INTERIOR PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHURCH, THETFORD.

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Army. It was an insignificant single-chambered building of brick, flint, and chalk, with thatched roof. By some strange paradox, the only Thetford "Quaker" who attained eminence was Thomas Paine. The late Dr. M. D. Conway said:—"Had there been no Quakerism there had been no Thomas Paine." Of the modest chapel he wrote:—"This was his more important birthplace. . . His first essay, the plea for negro emancipation, was brought from the Thetford Meeting-house."

In Guildhall Street are the fine premises of the Co-operative Society, Ltd. Eastward the street joins Old Market Street, where stands the gaol, a grim black flint building with top windows barred, enlarged and restored in 1816, from which time date the borough arms and the vivid representations of leg and wrist-irons over the doors. It was sold by the Corporation to the Norfolk County Council in 1891, and now only serves as a police station. At the eastern end of this street the Market was held for centuries until its removal in 1786 to its present site in front of the Guildhall. The "Spread Eagle" is a rambling Elizabethan inn, immediately beyond which is an old house—formerly the residence of the Mingays—with sundial and a fine chimney-stack. Large red-brick figures indicate the date "1694" of the building of the "Dolphin" inn, but in the 15th century an inn of that name belonged to the Nunnery. On each side of the sign is the same squirming sea-monster with a wonderful goggle eye. The third ancient inn in this at one time important district, for long

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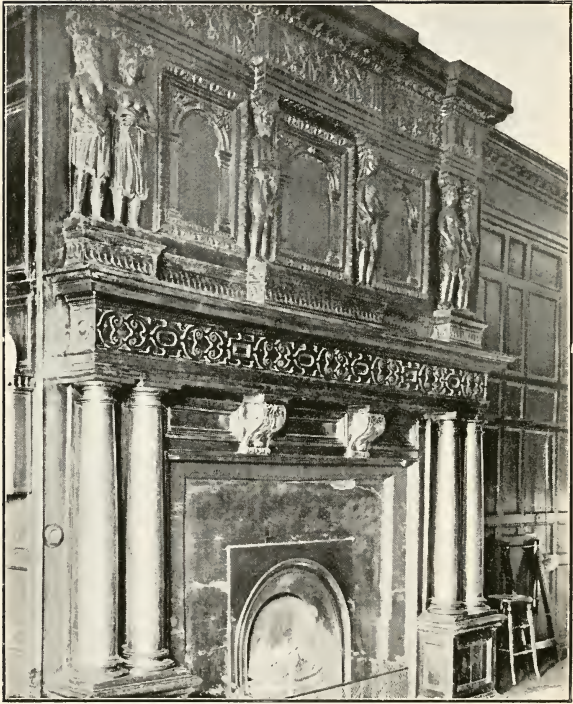
known as "Bailey End," is the "Good Woman," dating from 1661, but the old sign has unfortunately gone.

Opposite this inn, in the grounds of Ford Place, are the scant remains of the Convent of SS. Mary and John, founded for Augustinian Friars in 1387 by John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Portions of the church and monastery are preserved in the gardens, which abut on the Nuns' Bridges, where the ducking-stool stood, and where in 1583 three women were ducked for being scolds. Alongside the Norfolk bank of the Little Ouse is the Spring Walk, which was once a famous resort for invalids, who came to partake of the chalybeate waters. So popular did the spring become that in 1818 the Mayor (Mr. J. Burrell Faux) had the Spring Walk—a delightful riverside promenade—constructed, while in 1819 the Duke of Grafton laid the first stone of the pump room (now Spring House, a private residence). Sealed bottles from the spring were sent to various parts of England, from 120 to 160 gallons being despatched daily. Prosperity begat iniquity, and rather than pay the moderate charges for the genuine mineral water, bottles were filled from the river itself, and the healing powers of the Thetford spa at length became utterly discredited. At the present time the spring, which is in a meadow adjoining the Walk, is in a most neglected condition.

Where the Flour Mill stands there has been a Mill of some kind for at least 1,000 years, held at different periods by the King, Earl Warren, the Cluniac Monks and the Augustinian Friars. For many centuries it was known as the Pit Mill.



SPRING WALK, LITTLETON, CO.



JACOBEOAN MANTELPIECE IN KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD.
(By permission of the Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society.)

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About 100 yards distant down stream is the old Quay, and the same distance northwards is the Wesleyan Schoolroom, erected as a chapel in 1804, and succeeded by the present building in Tanner's Street in 1830. It is probable that before 1790 the Wesleyan Society here was connected with the Lynn Circuit, but in that year it was joined to the Bury St. Edmund's Circuit, of which in 1797 it became the chief place. A few yards from the Schoolroom, in Nether Row, is a range of iron palisading, which was originally erected by the Earl of Arlington in the 17th century in front of Euston Hall. At the bottom of Well Street is the Manor House, which is mostly Elizabethan, and is supposed to have been the site of the ancient seat of the Earls Warren.

At the junction of Well Street with King Street is St. Cuthbert's Church, and a little lower down the latter street is the Baptist Church, built in 1864 by a society formed in 1859. Nearly at the bottom of the street, back from the road and fronted by a magnificent copper beech and other trees, is the King's House, surmounted by the royal arms, and even now the most interesting specimen of domestic architecture in the town. Thetford appears always to have been favoured by royalty, and its visitors included Edwards I., II. and III., Richard II. and his Queen, Henry VI., and Queen Elizabeth. James I., however, stayed here week after week for hunting, shooting, and hawking, and on July 8th, 1609, Sir William Berwick received a warrant of £1,000 for a house at Thetford for the King's recreation. Portions of the present building seem to be those which were added

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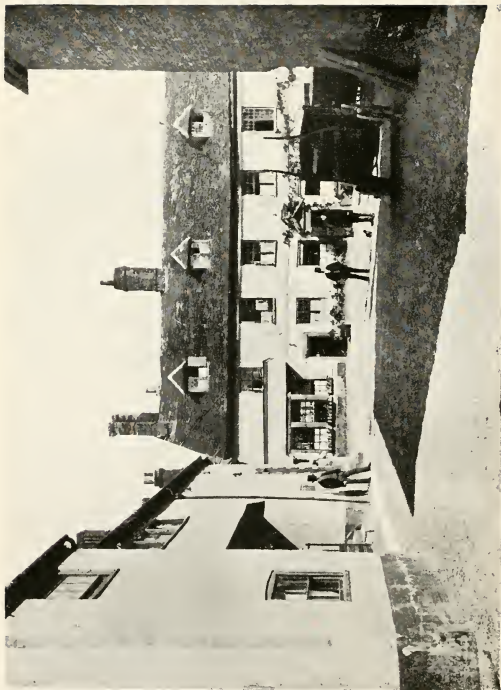
by its royal owner. There is a Jacobean mantelpiece with beautifully-carved figures, carved beams, and oak-pannelled walls. In 1628 the house was granted by the King to Andrew Pitcarne, one of the grooms of his Majesty's bed-chamber, who appears to have disposed of it without delay to Sir Thomas Wodehouse, whose arms carved in stone may still be seen in the conservatory.

The "Bell Hotel"—opposite St. Peter's Church—is the oldest and the most interesting of the twenty-nine inns in the town. In 1493 a Bell inn on this site belonged to the College of the Virgin Mary in Bailey End, and possibly some of this 15th century building remains in the gable near Bridge Street. A 16th century bye-law enacted that all fish caught in the rivers were to be exposed for sale at the Bell Corner, and the diary of the Rev. J. Rous, Rector of Santon Downham from 1623 to 1644, shows that proclamations, &c., were posted "on the Bell corner post at Thetford." At the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, the noted Betty Radcliffe was the landlady, and in addition to being a popular coaching-house, its courtyard was frequently filled with the equipages of the neighbouring gentry. The present building is mostly Elizabethan, and its picturesque courtyard has furnished a subject for many artists and photographers. Inside there is an ancient door with a key of remarkable size and antiquity, several old fire-places with quaint Dutch tiles, and many carved beams.

The continuation of King Street in a straight line is Minstergate Street, which was one of the ways to the great



KING STREET, THETFORD. 902



THE BELL HOTEL AND YARD.

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

priory ; it is now chiefly noted as the site of the engineering works of Messrs. C. Burrell and Sons, Ltd., who employ over 400 men in the manufacture of traction and portable engines, road rollers, and steam plough engines, which are exported to all parts of the world. Part of the works occupy the site of the Church and Churchyard of St. Nicholas, and the Monks' Water Lane adjoins the western side. Other industries in which the inhabitants are engaged are the manufacture of steel pulp ware, malting, brewing, printing, making artificial manure, and agricultural pursuits.

There are somewhat meagre remains of the magnificent Cluniac Priory of St. Mary, one of the five largest monasteries of that order in England, and in a county of monasteries only exceeded in size by those of Norwich and Walsingham. Founded by Roger Bigod in 1104 on the Suffolk side of the river, its quarters soon became too cramped, and a site in the Norfolk part of the town was secured, and the foundation stones laid by Roger Bigod and Abbot Stephen in 1107, after Bishop Herbert de Losinga had helped to dig the foundations. Eight days after Bigod died, and it was not until 1114 that the monks took up their residence in the new priory. The church, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Andrew, was a splendid edifice, beautifully adorned. It was built in the form of a Latin cross, 248 feet in length and 123½ feet in width across the transepts, and was about two-thirds the size of Norwich Cathedral. In the centre of the cross was a massive Norman tower 36 feet square, and there were two others at the west

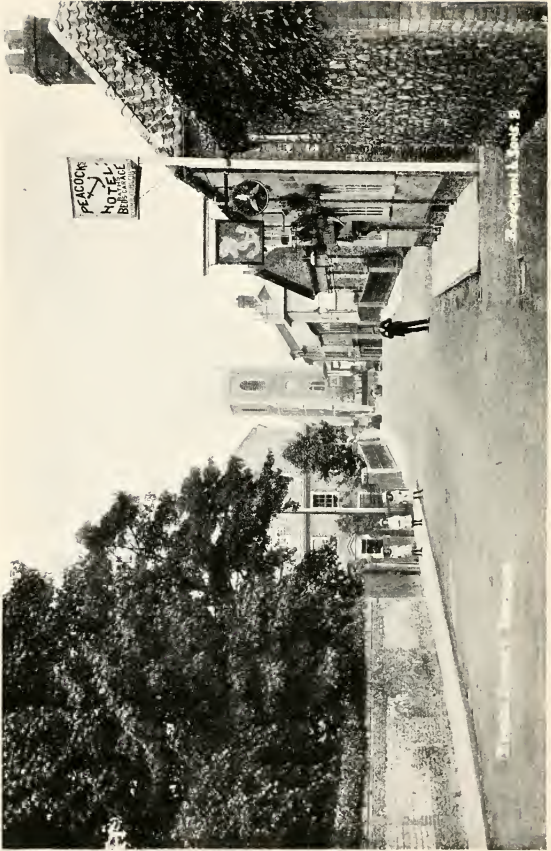
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end. Adjoining the north transept was the sacristy ; adjoining the south the chapter-house ; while the Chapel of the Virgin Mary was built about 1250 at the east end. Thousands of pilgrims came to Thetford, chiefly on account of the miracles said to be wrought at the shrine of the Virgin in this chapel. Contemporary chroniclers record that the dumb were made to speak, the blind to see, and even the dead are said to have been restored to life. The minster and the chapel of Our Lady contained the tombs of some of the most renowned English noblemen, notably the Bigods, Mowbrays, and Howards. The monastery was suppressed on February 16th, 1540—being one of the last in England to be so dealt with—and its possessions in fifty-three Norfolk, twenty-four Suffolk, six Cambridgeshire, and two Essex parishes, were granted to the Duke of Norfolk. The ground-plan of the church may still be traced with but little difficulty, but the ruins of the domestic parts of the priory are very fragmentary. The Church was Norman, the Lady Chapel and Refectory Early English, and the prior's apartments and north western or "Abbey Gate" Perpendicular, of late 15th century work. The last-named, which is 36 feet square and 42 feet high, is well-preserved. These ruins are now in private grounds, and cannot be inspected without permission.

Between the Abbey ruins and the river are the Water Meadows, through which runs a footpath, which may be followed along the river to the Two-mile-bottom Common, or the third staunch may be crossed and the walk continued



THE ABBEY GATE, THETFORD,



Peacock Hotel, Peacock, B.

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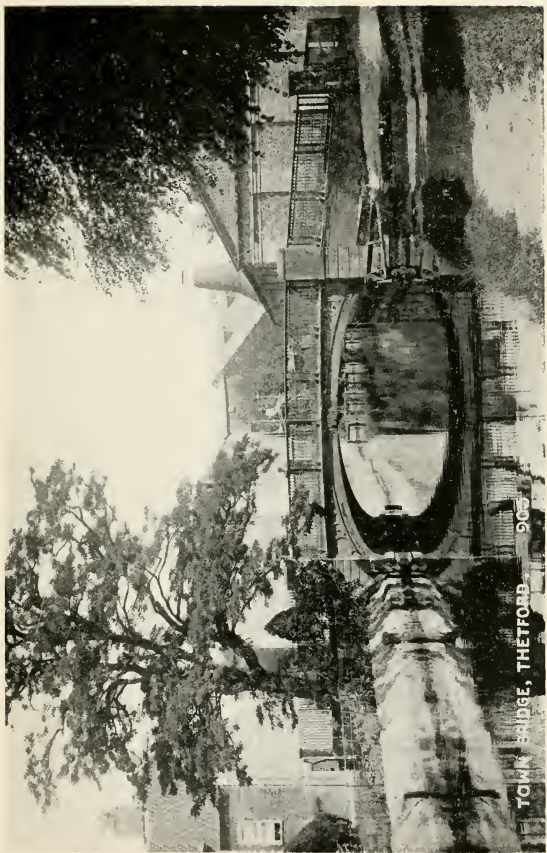
on the Suffolk side of the stream. Returning to Bridge Street, what is now the residence of Mr. A. Colby was until about 50 years ago part of the "George" inn, famous for its annual dinner in connection with Thetford Wool Fair, founded in 1792 by "Coke of Norfolk," afterwards first Earl of Leicester.

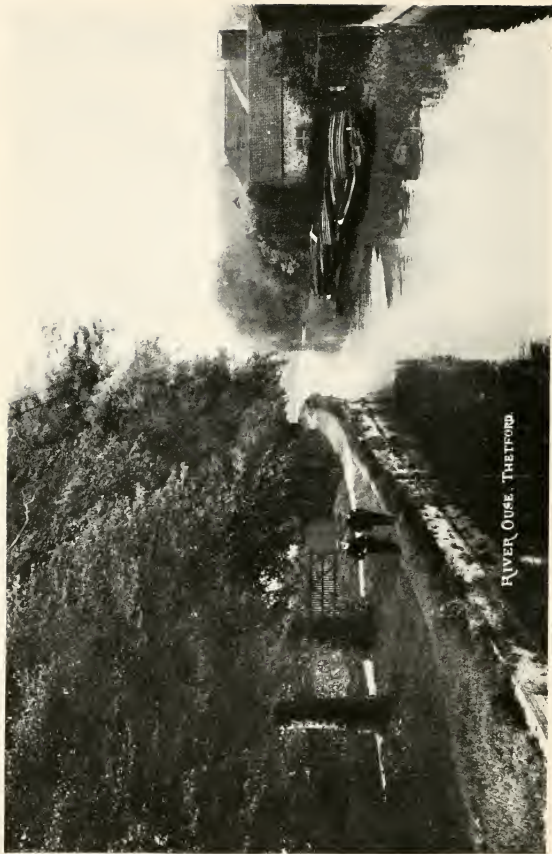
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CHAPTER III.

THE RAMBLE CONTINUED IN THETFORD, SUFFOLK.

The iron bridge spanning the Little Ouse a hundred yards below its junction with the Thet, and forming a connecting-link between Norfolk and Suffolk, was erected in 1829, and is popularly known as the "Town Bridge," but more correctly as "St. Christopher's Bridge." The Act for making the river navigable between Thetford and Brandon was passed in 1669, but as the Corporation of Thetford declined to do the necessary work, it was undertaken by the Earl of Arlington, who received a toll of 6d. per ton, last, or chaldron. His daughter, the first Duchess of Grafton, presented the navigation to the town, and the Corporation still have jurisdiction between Thetford and Wilton Bridge, a length of stream on which there are 7 staunches—out of 33 in all England—erected in 1829 at a cost of £4,200. Though undeniably picturesque, they have few merits save cheapness. Even a few years ago it was no uncommon thing to see a gang of black fen "lighters" moored near the Town Bridge, but the river is now but little used for commercial purposes. Extending from the bridge to the Canons' Water Lane, for half a mile on the south bank of the stream is the





RIVER HOUSE, THETFORD

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

Haling Path, a most delightful riverside walk. On reaching Brandon Road the right-hand turn brings one in about a hundred yards to a bank rising steeply from the roadside, and forming part of an oval rampart and ditch, known as "Red Castle," and now planted and strictly preserved. It seems not improbable that it was the moot-hill of the Hundred of Thetford.

A short distance further westward Thetford Warren is reached. Here, crowning one of the undulations of the East Anglian Heights, is the Warren Lodge, a thatched building of flint and pebbles, quoined with freestone, and having the arch over the door turned with flat bricks, probably Roman. The walls of the Old Lodge are over a yard thick; there is only one window, a hole in the wall about a foot square; and in one corner of the bedroom is a cell containing a niche. A tube in the thickness of the wall, presumably for communication at night, connects bedroom and porch, and in the stone staircase, which is wonderfully narrow, there is not room for a man to stand upright. The big well is $103\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep.

Returning towards the town, in an enclosure, surrounded by chalk walls, south of the highway opposite the lodge-gate of the Canons, stood St. John's Hospital for Lepers, reminding us that Norfolk was at one time the most leprous county in England. On the other side of the road are remains of the Priory of Canons of the Holy Sepulchre or of the Holy Cross, founded in 1109 by William de Warenne. Its remains are now almost indistinguishable from the modern

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

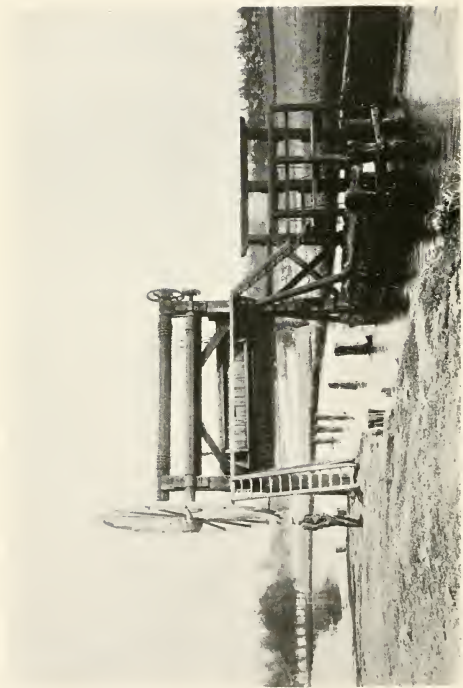
buildings which have been built of its stones ; the nave of the Church has been converted into a barn, and the ivy-covered tower is part of the farm buildings.

Following the Brandon Road until its junction with London Road, on the other side of the highway will be noticed the Roman Catholic Chapel, consisting of chancel and south porch, built in 1826, with seating accommodation for 150 persons. Its high altar is relieved by lofty Corinthian pillars, and surmounted by a large painting of St. Joseph and the Virgin. A little further southwards on the same road is the cemetery, which was opened in 1855. Part of it was then occupied by a tumulus, and it is the site of the Church of St. Margaret, which about 1390 was assigned as a house of lepers.

Retracing our steps into the town, and passing the Girls' and Boys' Grammar Schools, about one hundred yards before reaching the Town Bridge, a fine yew tree marks the beginning of Bury Road, the opposite corner being the site of the ancient cockpit. On this road, just before reaching St. Mary's Church, are four almshouses with curious brick chimneys, erected in 1612 at the expense of Sir Richard Fulmerston, and built of black flint and ashlar—the latter the spoils of some of the monastic foundations whose possessions had enriched their founder. A slab nearly in the centre bears the following rendering of Hebrews xii. 14 :—“ Follow peace and holiness with all men ; without the which no man shall see the Lord,” and there are also numerous initials, said to be those of former occupants, carved on the freestone



THE MAJING PAYA, THE TROOP



FIRST STAUNCH ON LITTLE OUSE, THETFORD.

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blocks. At the south end are remains of a sundial dated 1612, with inscriptions, including "God bless the founder of this work." In the gardens opposite, the western planes are considered to be the finest in the country.

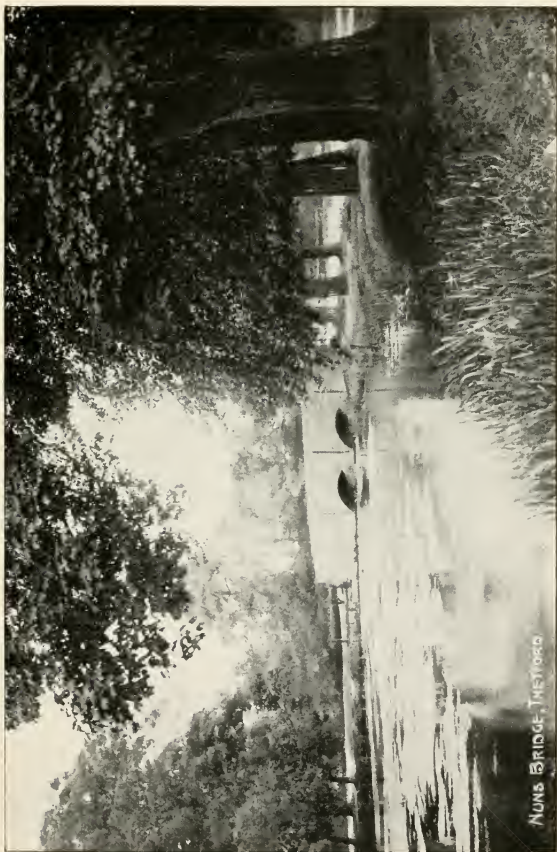
Further up Bury Road are three almshouses founded by Miss Matilda Carley in 1895, and a little beyond, the Gasworks, owned by a private company, and erected on the site of St. Edmund's Church. Here in July, 1907, a stone coffin six feet ten inches long, and two feet seven inches wide at the head, containing the skeleton of a man of six feet one inch, was disinterred. The coffin and contents are still preserved in the garden. At the junction of Bury Road and Barnham Cross Common stands Thetford Union Workhouse, which will accommodate some 300 inmates. There is also a chapel, built in 1863, and dedicated to St. Barnabas. The Union was formed in 1835, and when a portion of the Giltcross Union was added in 1901 it became the eighteenth largest in England.

Not far from the Workhouse is the Benedictine Nunnery of St. George. It is said to have been founded by the Abbot of Bury in 1020 in commemoration of the sanguinary conflict at Snarehill between King Edmund and the Danes. Originally a monastery, in 1160 the two surviving Canons made a voluntary resignation into the hands of the Abbot of Bury, and it was then given to the Nuns of St. George, who held it to the Dissolution. The Church was parochial until given to the Nunnery, and was about 150 feet by 25 feet. It is now converted into a stable for racehorses, the

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

only feature of interest being a fine transitional Norman arch leading into what was formerly the south transept. All the buildings have been modernised, though in the gardens are the ivy-clad ruins of the nunnery itself. In the middle of the 16th century a dwelling-house called "The Place" was built among the ruins, and here lived Sir Richard Fulmerston, Sir Edward Clere, and Sir Edwin Rich. Here in 1569 Lord Daere lost his life by a fall from a vaulting-horse, said (but without any evidence) to have been purposely rendered insecure by his guardian, Sir Richard Fulmerston. An arch of red brick still standing in a boundary wall appears to have been erected preparatory to Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1578, and formerly abutted on the Old Euston Road, by which Evelyn came on September 5th, 1677, "to the burrough town, where stand the ruines of a religious house."

From the Nuns' Bridge the road on the south of the Little Ouse was at one time part of the Icknield Way. It now turns, at "Chunk Harvey's Grave," into Mill Lane, where the Patent Pulp Ware Manufactory is situated. At this spot on the river there has probably been a mill for at least 1,000 years. Originally Bishop's Mill, it was for a long period known as St. Audrey's Mill, and has been used for various purposes—at the present time for the manufacture of "Thetford Unbreakable Steel Pulp Ware," articles made from which combine lightness and durability. On the other side of the road is Bellman's Close, which adjoins St. Audrey's Churchyard, and derived its name from a bequest of Thomas Gent, who in 1608 left this piece of land to the



NUNS BRIDGE, THE FORD



LITTLE BRIDGE
SPRING WALKS
THE FORD

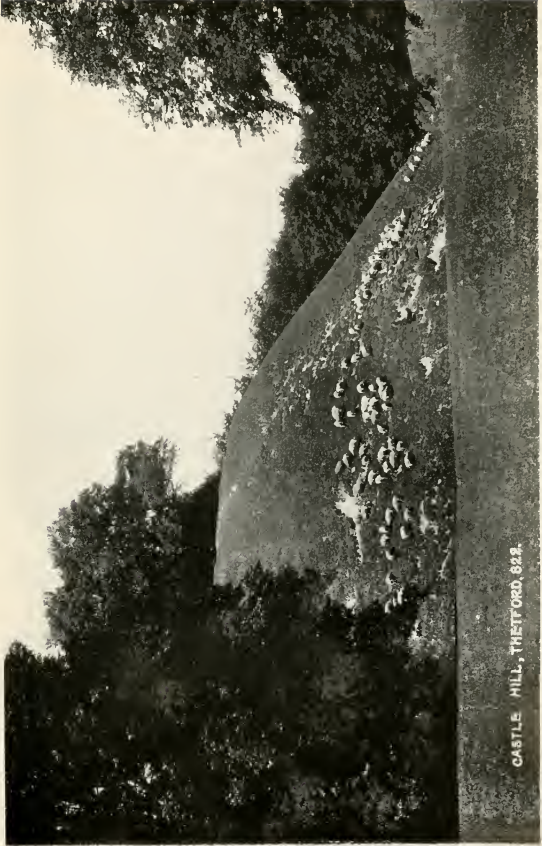
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Corporation for the use of the poor, and for the ringing of a bell at four a.m. and eight p.m. every day in the year—a custom long discontinued. Thence the narrow lane to the right leads to the Spring Walk, and over the “Little Bridges” into Norfolk.

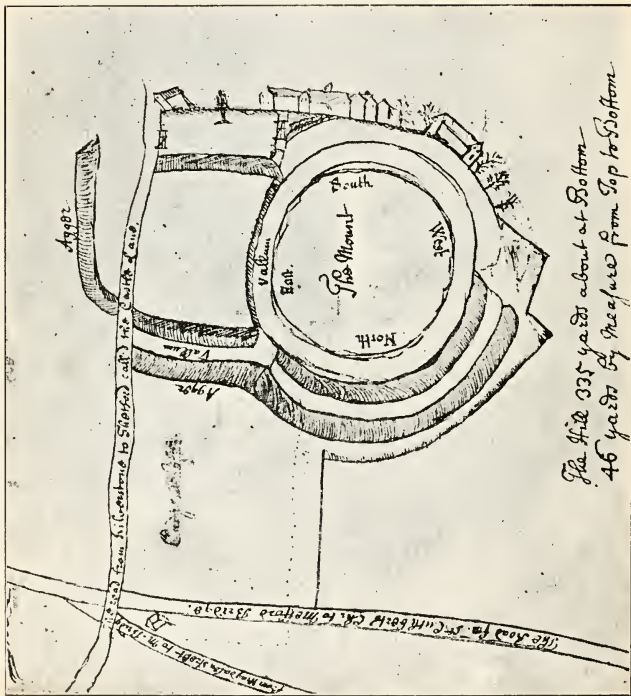
CHAPTER IV.

DESCRIBES THE CASTLE HILL.

Tantalising though their almost entire lack of history may be, undoubtedly the most attractive relics of the past to be seen in Thetford are the Castle Hill and surrounding earthworks, which, notwithstanding the devastation wrought by past generations, are still the largest in East Anglia. The Castle Hill itself is hidden to some extent by the fine trees in the Castle Meadow. It is, however, more than twice as high as any other earthwork in Norfolk, with the exception of the mound at Castle Rising, which is 43 feet high, while that at Thetford has a vertical height of 81 feet, and about 100 feet measured up the slope. On the summit, from which an extensive view may be obtained, there is a depression from eight to ten feet below the surrounding bank, and in this five elms, planted in 1823, still flourish. At the base the Castle Hill has a circumference of nearly 1,000 feet. The most remarkable feature of the earthworks is the double line of ramparts and ditches on the north, and the evidence of ancient plans and documents seems to indicate that these were originally continued—though probably not in an unbroken line—so as to form a horseshoe-shaped base-



CASTLE HILL, THETFORD. 829.



THETFORD CASTLE HILL ABOUT 1740, from a drawing by T. Martin,
in the possession of Mr. W. Rye,
(By permission of the Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society.)

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court, similar in form to a vast number of "mote castles" in the British Isles. North of the mound, the first rampart—one of the "little hills"—has a vertical height of 30 feet, and the second of 35 feet, above the level of the inner ditch. The "Wooded Hill" is 35 feet above the adjoining ditch, and the outer rampart 19 feet above. The total length of the existing ramparts is about 840 feet. Traditions relating to the earthworks are quite improbable, with the exception of that which states that some of the chalk of which they are constructed was brought from the Gallows' Pits, a few hundred yards to the northward.

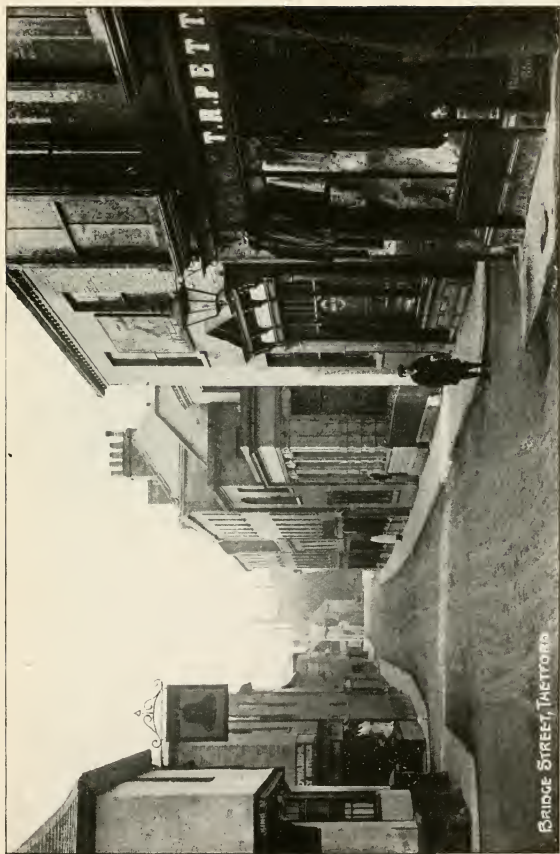
The earliest reference to the Castle Hill appears to be a description, in the Corporation Records, relating to a period soon after the Norman Conquest, of William de Warenne as "Lord of the Town and Castle of Thetford," and Mr. H. F. Killick has recently made a discovery showing that there were portions of an ancient castle existing in mediæval times. All the eastern part of the town was for centuries known as Bailey End, a bailey being the outermost part of the precincts of a castle.

All the early inhabitants and invaders of East Anglia have been credited with the construction of these earthworks, but at the present day the majority of these mounds with base-courts are considered to be Norman, though few others are of such vast extent as this. At whatever period the hill was thrown up, its primary purpose appears to have been to command the adjacent fords and the Icknield Way, the latter passing quite through the earthworks, and being now

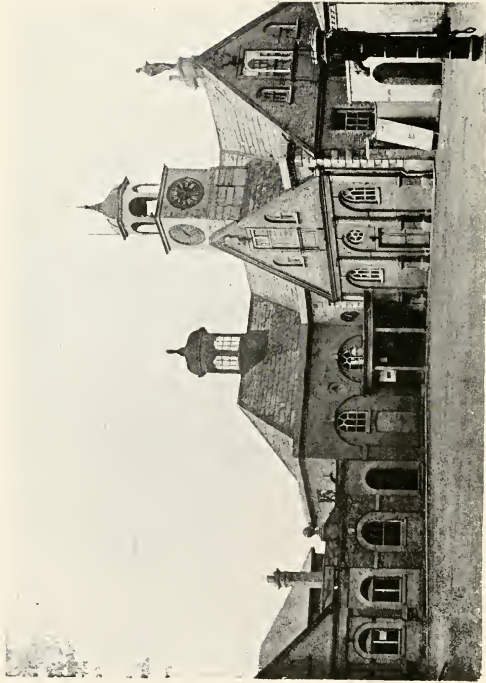
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known as Castle Lane. Until 1772 it was flanked by a long rampart in Friars' Close, between Castle Lane and the river Thet. The Hon. Roger North, who was at school here in the 17th century, described it as "a Saxon Castle Hill and three great ramparts round it"; while Evelyn referred to it in 1677 as a "round mountaine artificially raised." As there is no mention of the earthworks in Domesday Book, it may be conjectured that they were thrown up subsequent to 1080 A.D., either by Roger Bigod, who held Halwick Manor in Thetford, or by Earl Warren, who was Lord of the Manor of Thetford. The former died in 1114, the latter in 1090, and the fact that he was subsequently termed "Lord of the Town and Castle" is presumptive evidence in his favour.

Since 1869 the Castle Meadow and earthworks have been the property of Lord Amherst of Hackney, who has allowed the public unrestricted access, in addition to the right-of-way through the meadow.



BRIDGE STREET, TAIOTFOA



THE OLD TOWN HALL, THETFORD.

CHAPTER V.
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TREATS OF THE TOWN HALL AND THE MUNICIPALITY.

Whatever form of communal government existed before the Conquest was probably dictated by the necessities of the agricultural community and its open-field system of land cultivation, modified first by the residence of royalty, and afterwards by the strong Danish influence and the frequent necessity for military control of the town. At the Survey, Thetford was a royal manor, held by the King in demesne. The burgesses elected one of their number to act on their behalf ; he was termed a *præpositus*, and was only subject to the overlordship of the King's bailiff. From the reign of Richard I. the town was governed by a Bailiff, Coroner, and Mayor, the first-named being the chief, and presiding at the King's Court, as well as acting as governor of the gaol. Since the middle of the 14th century the borough has been connected more or less closely with the Duchy of Lancaster, and John of Gaunt transferred the chief power to the Mayor. From 1272 to 1907 we have the names of Mayors at 535 elections. Until 1573, when the town was first incorporated by Queen Elizabeth, it was a borough by prescription only, and from that time until 1835 the

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Corporation consisted of a Mayor, ten Aldermen, and twenty Common Councilmen, but since the Municipal Reform Act of a Mayor, four Aldermen, and twelve Councillors.

The Guild of St. Mary, whose habitation was between Ford Street and the river, was probably the progenitor of the Town Council. The Guildhall was built in the Grass Market (now the Market Place) in 1337, and probably occupied part of the site of the present Guildhall. In the reign of Henry VIII. the Mayor and burgesses sold the plate of this Guild, and devoted the money towards defraying the expenses of obtaining a Charter of Incorporation, which when granted included the right to use the Guildhall as a "Common Hall," "to hold and perform all Courts, Pleas, Causes, and matters whatsoever from time to time as they shall think fit and necessary." In 1680 it was almost rebuilt by Sir Joseph Williamson, and about 1800 by the Corporation. By the end of last century, it had become so insecure that it was pulled down, and a new building with much the same ground-plan erected on the site.

This fine Guildhall, opened in February, 1902, consists of basement, fire-engine house, kitchen, scullery, Mayor's parlour, hall 52 feet by 27 feet, Council Chamber, Magistrates' Room, County Court, entrance hall, and Grand Jury Chamber. Surmounting the whole is a dome and clock visible from many points in the town and immediate neighbourhood. The clock bell was cast in 1800 by Thomas Osborn, of Downham Market. In the Council Chamber are ancient stained glass arms of Sir Joseph Williamson, the



Town Hall, Norwich.

36.



CIVIC REGALIA.

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

Borough, and King Charles II., and a portrait in oils of the second Duke of Grafton.

The Borough Seal (commonly called the arms) represents a quadrangular castle embattled and surmounted by a tower, and from this a flag. From each of the outer towers issues a demi-man, that on the dexter side holding a sword, and that on the sinister blowing a horn, all proper. It probably dates almost in this form from 1148, and seems originally to have belonged to the Town Bailiff, and to have been made from the arms of the manorial lords.

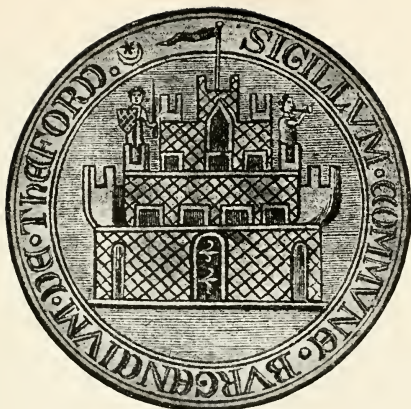
The Corporation Regalia consists of two silver maces bearing the Arms of England, and probably dating from the time of James I.; a splendid sword, by the same maker as those of Norwich and Yarmouth, and a mace (one of the finest in England), both given by Sir Joseph Williamson in 1678; a cup with cover and salver of silver double-gilt, presented by James Sloan in 1698; a silver-mounted staff, added at the restoration of the old Guildhall in 1800; and a mayoral chain and emblem presented in 1902 by the Mayor (Mr. W. C. Fison) as a memorial of the Coronation of Edward VII.

It is probable that for nearly 600 years the Lent Assizes for the County of Norfolk were held at Thetford—though we have no mention of them until 1451, when they are referred to in the “Paston Letters”; before the middle of the 16th century in the old Shirehouse, and after that in the Guildhall. Since 1832 all the Norfolk Assizes have been held at Norwich, the indignation of the Thetford towns-

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people at their removal being, to some extent, appeased by the grant of a separate Court of Quarter Sessions in 1838 by Lord John Russell.

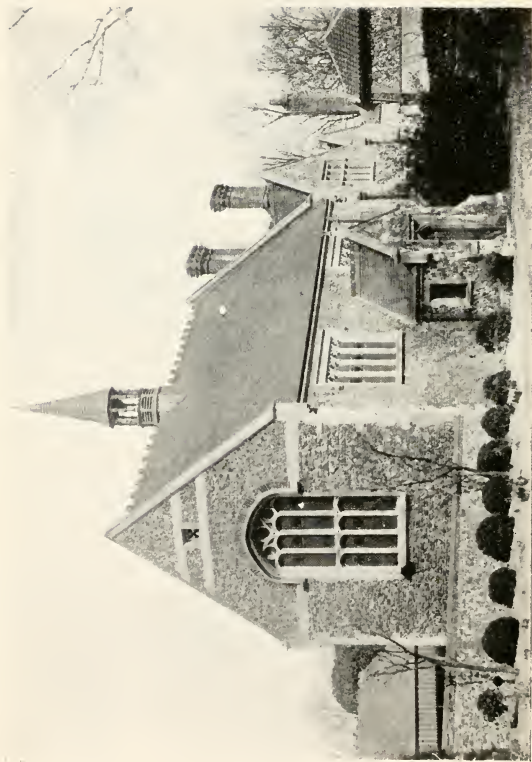
When Thetford first sent representatives to Parliament is uncertain, but the earliest record appears to be 1529, when there were two members. By the Charter of 1573 the privilege of returning two members was confirmed, provided they were "discreet and honest men," and were elected at the expense of the borough. Until 1685 the rights of election were vested in the inhabitants generally, but in that year were given exclusively to the Corporation, who numbered 31. This remained so until 1832, and two members were sent under the enlarged franchise until 1867, when the number was reduced to one, and in the year following the privilege was lost entirely. This is not to be wondered at, as corruption was rife, and the election records form a sordid tale.



THE BOROUGH ARMS.



THE GRAMMAR SCHOOLS CREST.



BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL, THETFORD.

CHAPTER VI.

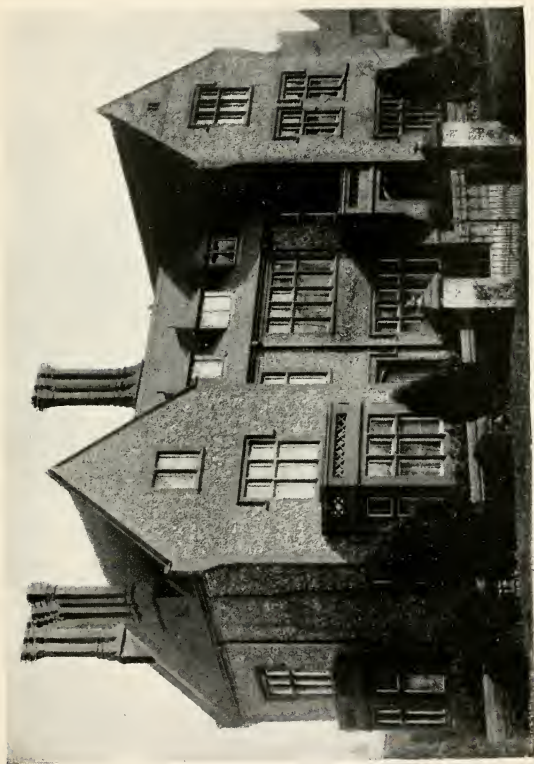
TRACES THE HISTORY OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOLS.

Few English towns of similar size are better equipped for education than Thetford, as in addition to commodious Elementary Schools, there are excellent Boys' and Girls' Grammar Schools. A school is said to have been established here in Saxon times, and in any case, when it was made a Bishop's See in 1071, a Grammar School would have been attached, most probably quite close to the site of the present Boys' School. On the removal of the See, Bishop Losinga prevented the school from falling under monkish control by giving it to the Dean. In a letter addressed to his brethren and his sons of Thetford, he said:—"Know ye that I have given back to Dean Bund his school at Thetford, as he ever better and more fully held it, and I order that no such school shall be held there, except his own or any which he shall allow." This appears to be the earliest known example of the monopoly of the authorised grammar schoolmaster. In the Bishop's registers there are various appointments in the 14th and 15th centuries to the mastership "of the Grammar School of the town of Thetford." The school probably lapsed early in the 16th century. After the Dissolution most of the ecclesiastical property in Thetford was

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

granted to the Duke of Norfolk and Sir Richard Fulmerston, his Master of Horse, who by his will dated 1566, left lands on which a "free Grammar School" was to be erected, and bequeathed property for a preacher to give four sermons each year in St. Mary's Church, to build a dwelling-house for a schoolmaster and usher, and almshouses for four poor people—two men and two women.

The site of the school then erected is of particular interest. Long before the Conquest it was the site of the Parish Church of St. Mary the Great, which in 1071 was rebuilt by Bishop Herfast and converted into a cathedral, the Church of the Holy Trinity being erected close by for the convenience of the parishioners. In 1094 the See was removed to Norwich, and St. Mary's closed. Then Roger Bigod bought it, and built a small Priory near by for Cluniac monks, but they were soon moved to the Norfolk side of the stream. From 1114 to 1340 it seems to have been unoccupied, but in the latter year Henry, Earl of Lancaster, procured it from the Prior of Thetford and installed some members of the Dominican Order of Black Friars, who greatly improved the buildings, and held them until the Dissolution. Remains of ancient buildings on this site consist of a fine arch in the Boys' Grammar School, probably that connecting the arcading between the nave and south aisle with the south wall of the chancel—which apparently had no aisles—and opening into the south transept. From its massive masonry it is probable that the arch was one of the four which formed the base of the central tower of the Church of the Holy Trinity.



BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL HOUSE, THETFORD.



GIRLS GRAMMAR SCHOOL, THETFORD. (THE FRONT).

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

Behind the gymnasium and laboratory there are also walls and fragments of windows.

The school was apparently erected in 1576 on a corner of the Black Friars' Yard, but in 1610 an Act was passed "for the school and other good uses in Thetford," and by this the Mayor, Burgesses, and Commonalty were appointed Trustees. After 1612 the school was divided into two departments, one being in charge of an usher, and the other of a master, the latter alone teaching Latin. Great changes have been made since 1860. In 1880 the school was practically rebuilt and a headmaster's house erected at a cost of £5,600, and in 1884 the present master, the Rev. B. Reed, B.A., was appointed. There have since been added to the school chemical and physical laboratories, a gymnasium, and a carpenter's shop, making it one of the best-equipped in the Eastern Counties. A fine Recreation Ground of four acres, adjoining the Bury Road, is also held on lease. The income of the governing body—the School and Hospital Foundation—is derived from the dividends on about £22,000 in consols, and grants from the Norfolk County Council and Board of Education.

A Boys' Grammar School is a privilege which Thetford shares with many other places; its unique educational feature in Norfolk is a Girls' Grammar School. The erection of this was chiefly owing to the fact that in 1875 a scheme was sanctioned by which one-fourth of the nett revenue of Sir Joseph Williamson's "Binding Charity" should be used for educational purposes. This goes to the School and

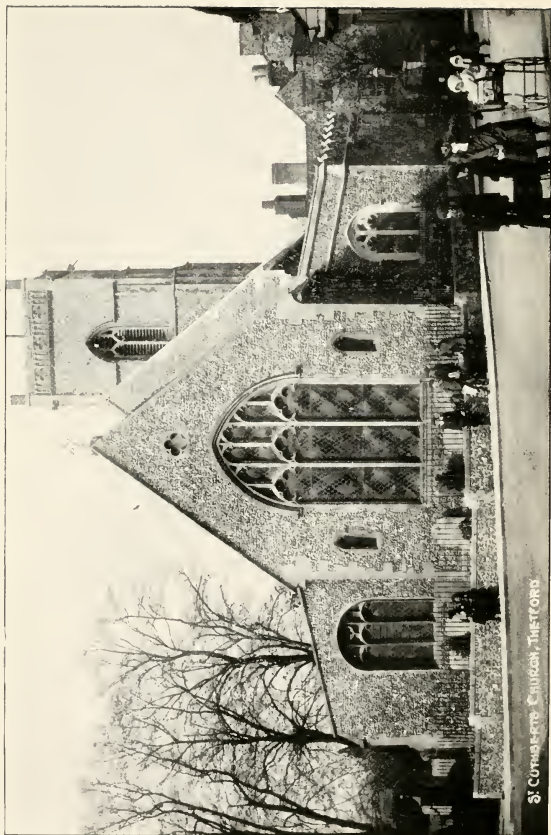
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Hospital Foundation, and in addition £4,000 was specially devoted to the building of the Girls' Grammar School, which was opened in 1886. It is a fine building in the Elizabethan style, with a good frontage to London Road, and a large playing-field in the rear. A science class-room and a room for isolation in case of sickness were added in 1904.

The coat of arms granted to Sir Richard Fulmerston in 1556 is used by both schools. It is: "Or, on a fess azure, a rose between two garbs gules, between three seamews of the second, beaked and membered of the third," with the Norman-French motto, "*Loyauté me oblige.*"



GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL, THETFORD. (FROM THE GARDEN).



St. Columba's Church, Tilford

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CHAPTER VII.

DESCRIBES THE PARISH CHURCHES.

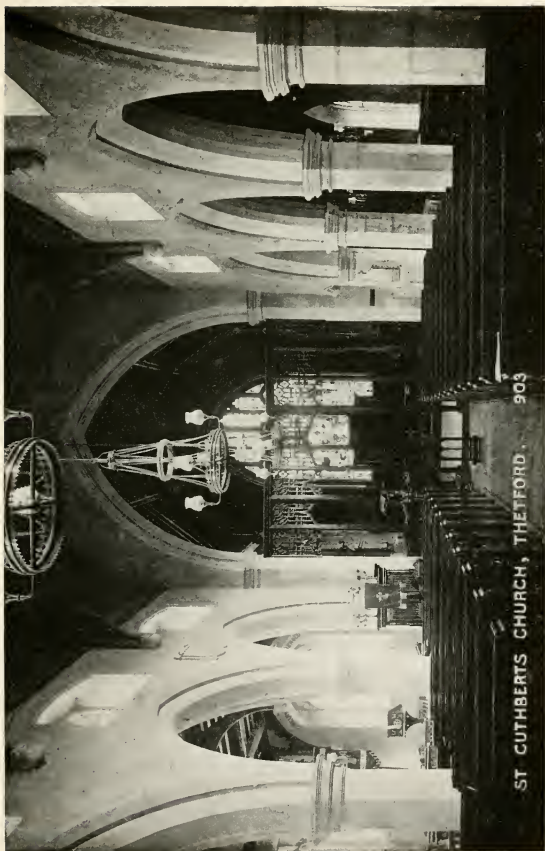
Before the Dissolution a resident in Thetford could not plead the distance to the nearest church as an excuse for non-attendance, for there were at least nineteen Parish Churches, in addition to five attached to the religious houses. Yet in 1577 the Mayor and Constable were fined for not warning the inhabitants of the penalties incurred by not going to church, and four years later a person was imprisoned for so offending. Of the parochial churches, the very sites of two are unknown, and of the remainder no traces of eleven exist above ground. The three still used are St. Cuthbert's and St. Peter's in Norfolk, and St. Mary's in Suffolk.

St. Cuthbert's is the only ancient church in Norfolk so dedicated, and formerly belonged to the Canons. An instance of the ecclesiastical oppression of the time was furnished in 1582, when a number of men convicted of "playing at skaits on Christmas Day" were ordered to kneel down in the church before the whole congregation and pray God to forgive them. On August 8th, 1851, the tower fell and destroyed a portion of the nave and a newly-erected organ. In the two following years the church was

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entirely rebuilt, with the exception of the foundations and rubble walls, which were faced with flint, in the Late Perpendicular style, and now consists of chancel, nave, north and south aisles, south porch, vestry, and a western tower containing three bells with these inscriptions:—1, "Thomas Draper, Mayer." 2, "Thomas Gardiner, Sudbury, fecit 1724." 3, "Henry Pleasant did me run in the year 1701." The Drapers were bell-founders in Thetford from 1588 to 1644; Thomas was Mayor in 1593, and John in 1612. The gargoyles on the church are extremely grotesque. The vestry was added in 1899, and the north aisle in 1902-3, when a pitchpine roof was substituted for the unsightly plaster ceiling in the nave. There is a good oak screen, and the pulpit is an interesting piece of work. The reredos was erected to the memory of Shelford Clarke Bidwell in 1875; the roof of the chancel to Eleanor Mary Bidwell in 1882; and the stained-glass east window to Thomas Shelford Bidwell in 1904. A lancet window in the chancel was filled with stained glass to the memory of John Sidney Johnson, and there are also brass tablets to the memory of Alfred W. Bond (1888) and Robert Cates (1900). A plated chalice, two patens, and a flagon date from 1810, and a silver communion set was given by Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Killick in 1906.

St. Mary's—formerly the Less, to distinguish it from the cathedral, St. Mary's the Great—is the oldest and largest church in the town, in the Norman and Perpendicular styles, consisting of nave, chancel, north and south aisles, north



ST CUTHBERTS CHURCH, THETFORD, 903



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, THETFORD.

9D

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

vestry, south porch, and large square western tower containing six bells, with the following inscriptions:—1, "Lester and Pack of London fecit 1765." 2, "John Draper made me 1615." 3, "Thomas Lester and Thos. Pack of London made me 1753." 4, "Thomas Gardiner Sudbury fecit 1725." 5, "John Darbie made me 1664 I. T. Osbourne Clarke Burrage Martin CW." 6, "Sa Maria John Goldsmith fecit 1711. Isaac Fawkes Churchwarden. Sa Maria." There is a Norman north doorway, and the Norman font not improbably belonged to the original church on this site. In 1850 the north aisle was rebuilt, and in 1866 the chancel (erected in 1802) was restored, and the west gallery removed, revealing a fine tower arch and a stained west window depicting an angel, with scroll inscribed, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving." The east window was the gift of the family of the Rev. William Collett, M.A., who was incumbent from 1828 to 1862, and has the Crucifixion for its subject. Two windows on the south side of the chancel were inserted by the Bidwell family to the memory of their parents, and four on the south side of the nave were purchased by subscription among the parishioners. There is a holy water stoup and a niche over the doorway into the church. Parts of an altar-tomb, formerly over the remains of Sir Richard Fulmerston, who died in 1577, are now on the wall of the south aisle. Two mural tablets bear the arms of the Mingay family, the individuals mentioned including James Mingay, M.P., J.P., K.C., F.S.A., who died in 1812, and William Robert Mingay

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and James Mingay, both three times Mayors of the borough. The pulpit and roof of the chancel were given to the memory of the Rev. Alfred Smith, F.S.A., who died in 1891, and was for many years incumbent ; the north aisle was restored in memory of the Rev. F. J. Cronshey, M.A., Rector from 1892 to 1895 ; and the oak rood-screen was erected in 1907 to the memory of Mrs. Smith-Dampier, widow of the Rev. A. F. Smith. All the Communion plate was presented in 1786 by James Mingay, K.C.

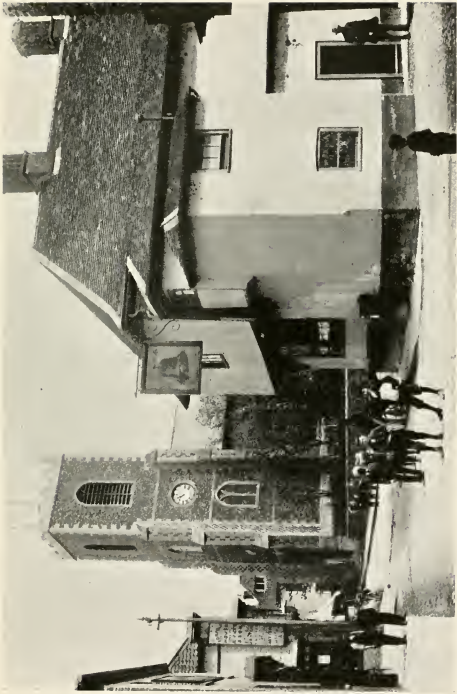
A St. Peter's Church was mentioned in Domesday as one of four appendant to the cathedral, but none of the present building is older than the 14th century. The tower was rebuilt in 1789, the six ancient bells disposed of, and the present peal of eight, cast by Thomas Osborn, of Downham Market, purchased. In addition to the maker's name the first has " Cum voco venite ; " the fourth

Our voices shall with joyful sound
Make hills and valleys echo round ;

the fifth

In wedlock's bands all ye who join
With hands your hearts unite,
So shall our tuneful tongues combine
To laud the nuptial rite ;

and the eighth " Percute dulce cano. Town of Thetford 1790." About the same time the church was restored, and new stained glass, bearing the arms of Mingay, Birch of Wretham, Buxton of Shadwell Court, Lord Petre and Sir William Altham, put in the windows of the nave, which are



ST. PETER'S CHURCH.



ST. PETERS CHURCH, THETFORD, 906

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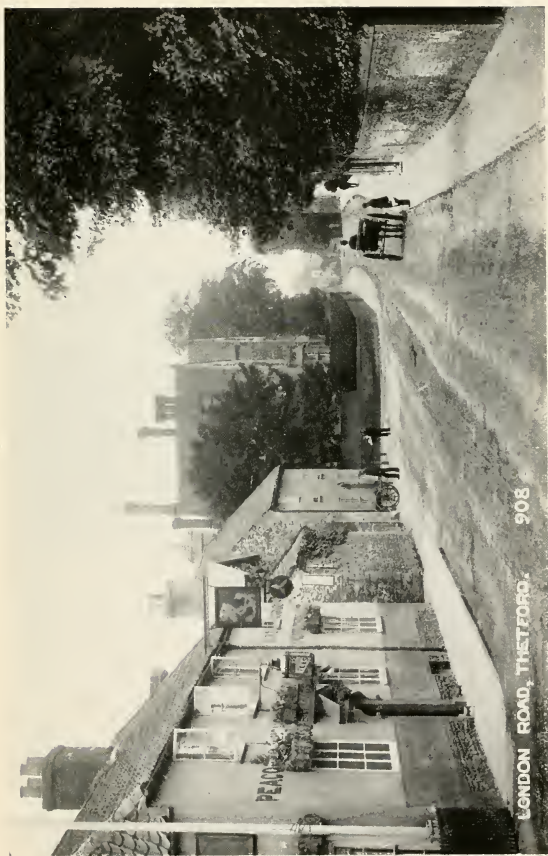
well proportioned, with good tracery. The church consists of nave, chancel, north aisle, north vestry, north porch, and western tower, in the Decorated and Perpendicular styles. On the buttresses of the south side of the nave are emblems of the Trinity, the Passion, St. Mary the Virgin, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Katherine. In 1870 a stained east window was inserted by Mr. Shelford Bidwell, and other alterations made; and in 1892-3 the church was thoroughly renovated. A clock provided by subscription was placed in the tower in 1867, and with the church, is now lighted by electricity. The brass lectern is a memorial of Cornell Henry Fison, who presented a fine carved oak reredos, which bears a representation of the Last Supper. There are various memorial tablets, the most noteworthy being those to Matthew Manning, M.D., the Rev. H. C. Manning, and the Rev. Thomas Sworde. The Communion plate was presented in 1791 by Robert Edward, Lord Petre. In the same year James Mingay defrayed the cost of surrounding the churchyard with the present tall iron palisading.

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CHAPTER VIII.

DEALS BRIEFLY WITH CELEBRITIES CONNECTED WITH THETFORD.

There are three main causes for the connection of celebrities with Thetford. To some it has given birth, to some education, and to others the privilege of representing it in Parliament. The most noted native, and the one whose influence has been most widely felt, is undoubtedly THOMAS PAINE, who was born on January 29th, 1737, in a room (still remaining) in the older portion of the house now occupied by Mrs. Tyrrell, about 50 feet from the top of White Hart Street, on the west side. His father Joseph was a staymaker and small farmer, who in 1734 was married at Euston Church to Frances Cocke, the daughter of a Thetford attorney. He was a member of the Society of Friends, she of the Church of England. Early influences helped largely to mould Paine's opinions. Especially was this the case with the religious beliefs of his father and mother, the atmosphere of the Friends' Meeting-house in Cage Lane, the "false heroism" of his master at the Grammar School, and the corrupt political life of the pocket borough in which he spent his youth. After various occupations in England, chiefly as an exciseman, he set sail



LONDON ROAD, THETFORD. 908



KING STREET, THETFORD. 304

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

for America in 1774 with a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin, and in a short time became editor of the "Pennsylvania Magazine." Seven Colonists were shot at Lexington in April, 1775; in January of the following year Paine issued his pamphlet "Common Sense," declaring for independence and a republican government. Few pamphlets have had a more electrical effect than this and the periodical issues of "The Crisis." He championed the cause of the colonists against the home government, with pen, sword, and money, helping materially to focus their aspirations into one channel. His pamphlet rendered the Declaration of Independence inevitable, and he was the first to use the words "The Free and Independent States of America." In many ways he rendered yeoman service, became Secretary to the Committee for Foreign Affairs, and watched the birth-throes of the greatest republic the world has seen. When in 1780 the financial position of the insurgents was bad, Paine started a subscription with 500 dollars, and subsequently negotiated a loan with the French government. In 1787 he returned to England, and visited his mother at Thetford. She then lived in a house in Heathenman (now Guildhall) Street, his father having died the previous year. Paine settled an allowance of 9s. per week on his mother, and probably visited the town for the last time in May, 1790, when his mother was buried. Then came the French Revolution, Edmund Burke's apostasy and his "Reflections." To this Paine replied "with an energy, courage, and eloquence worthy of his cause," to use John

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Morley's phrase. Two hundred thousand copies of the "Rights of Man" were circulated in six months; it was one of the best political treatises ever penned. Paine was indicted and convicted, but left for France twenty minutes after a warrant arrived for his arrest. In the meantime he had been elected a member of the French Convention, and during the stormy days that ensued, risked his own life in trying to save the King's, was imprisoned in the Luxembourg ten months, and only escaped the guillotine by the merest accident. In his prison cell, with the fear of death before his eyes, he wrote "The Age of Reason," which consummated English Deism. To some extent his religious writings partook of the coarseness of the age, but the standpoint of the "rebellious needleman," as Carlyle termed him, was closely allied to that of those who accept the "higher criticism." Paine founded the first Theistic Society in Christendom, and stated: "I believe in one God and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and helping to make our fellow creatures happy." He further said: "My country is the world, and my religion is to do good." In 1802 he returned to America, and met nothing but disappointment, at length, on June 8th, 1809, finding a peaceful haven in death. He was buried on his farm at New Rochelle. William Cobbett, first his antagonist, then his disciple, brought his bones to England in 1819. To-day only two or three persons know where they rest.

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In the intellectual world the obloquy which for nearly a century attached to the memory of Thomas Paine was effectually removed by the laborious researches of the late Dr. M. D. Conway. This son of Thetford consistently and persistently advocated old age pensions, freedom for the slave, the abolition of duelling, the extension of Government workshops, international arbitration, a progressive income-tax, free education and food for children, the rights of animals, justice for women, land law and various legal reforms, "one man one vote," and the referendum. He designed one of the first cast-iron bridges erected in England, and about 1776 advocated steam navigation. In mathematical, mechanical, and astronomical studies he was an adept. The "Dictionary of National Biography" says: "Paine deserves whatever credit is due to an absolute devotion to a creed believed by himself to be demonstrably true and beneficial. He showed undeniable courage, and is free from any suspicion of mercenary motives." He is the only Thetford celebrity whose influence has any vitality at the present day.

THOMAS MARTIN, antiquary, was born in the School House at Thetford, on March 8th, 1696, in the "Preacher's Chamber" near the river end of the old school buildings. His father was curate of St. Mary's parish, and Thomas was for some time the only scholar at the Free School, where he attended "constantly every morning, stayed the usual hours, and at night locked the door, of which he was entrusted with the key, and returned home, sometimes not seeing the master for several days." He became clerk to

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his brother, a Thetford attorney, but in 1723 settled at Palgrave, and there died on March 7th, 1771. In 1718 he was elected an F.S.A., and for some years previous to his death was the oldest Fellow. His "History of the Town of Thetford" was not published until 1779, and was then edited by Richard Gough.

SIR HENRY COLLETT, K.C.B., was born at Thetford in 1836, his father being Rector of St. Mary's. He entered the Bengal Army in 1855, fought in the Abyssinian, Afghan, and Burmese Wars, and the Chin-Lushai Expedition, and commanded the Manipur Field Force in 1891. He died ten years later.

Two other celebrities resided in Thetford for a time, EDMUND HENRY BARKER, a great classical scholar, who lived at the Manor House about 1815, and JOHN DREW SALMON, F.L.S., botanist and ornithologist, who dwelt in the town from December, 1833, to November, 1837. His natural history diaries, which give valuable information as to the fauna and flora of Thetford district, are preserved at Norwich Castle Museum.

In addition to Paine and Martin, the Grammar School has had other famous scholars. One of these was SIR ROBERT WRIGHT, of Wangford, who sat in Parliament for Lynn, accompanied Jeffreys on the Western Assize after Monmouth's Rebellion, and in 1687 was made Chief Justice of the King's Bench. The next year he presided at the trial of the Seven Bishops, and after the flight of James sought safety in the Old Bailey, where he died on May 18th,

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1689. The HON. ROGER NORTH was born at Tostock and came to school at Thetford with his brother Montagu. In 1678 he was made Steward to the See of Canterbury, in 1684 Solicitor-General to the Duke of York, and in 1688 Attorney-General to the Queen. He was also Member of Parliament for Dunwich. An accomplished musician, he wrote books on musical matters, law, fish and fish-ponds, English history, and the history of himself and his family. Other alumni are FRANCIS BLOMEFIELD (1705—1752), the topographer of Norfolk, and JAMES MINGAY, a native of Thetford, of which he became Mayor and one of its representatives in Parliament, and a noted King's Counsellor about 1800. He is referred to in "The Essays of Elia" as "Mingay with the iron hand . . . a blustering, loud-talking person."

Among those who have represented the borough in various Parliaments are WALTER HADDON (1557), one of the Masters of the Court of Requests; SIR ROBERT BRUCE COTTON, Bart. (1625), founder of the Cottonian Library, now in the British Museum; SIR HENRY VANE, Kt. (1628), Secretary of State to Charles I.; FRAMLINGHAM GAWDY, who sat in the Short and Long Parliaments, and kept a diary of the latter, which is preserved in the British Museum; ROBERT STEWARD (1658), afterwards a Master in Chancery; SIR ROBERT PASTON (1660), afterwards Earl of Yarmouth, whom Martin says put it to the vote what day should be set for the King's Restoration; SIR JOSEPH WILLIAMSON, Kt. (from 1669 to 1687),

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Secretary of State, Recorder of Thetford in 1682, Editor of the "Oxford Gazette" (now the "London Gazette"), fourth President of the Royal Society, Master of the Clothworkers' Company in 1676, and a generous benefactor to Thetford, who was interred in Westminster Abbey in 1701; JOHN TRENCHARD (1688), Secretary of State in 1692; BAPTIST MAY (1690), Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Charles II.; SIR THOMAS HANMER, Bart. (1701), Speaker of the House of Commons in 1713, and Editor of an edition of Shakespeare; Lieut.-General the Hon. HENRY SEYMOUR CONWAY (1762 to 1775), who fought at Dettingen, Fontenoy, Culloden, and Rochfort, and became Field Marshal, was subsequently Secretary of State with Rockingham and Pitt, and Leader of the House, a post he resigned in 1768, as he was in favour of leniency with the American Colonists; Major-General CHARLES FITZROY (1774), first Baron Southampton in 1780, aide-de-camp to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick at Minden, created General in 1793; THOMAS CREEVEY (1802 to 1818), Secretary to the Board of Control, Treasurer to the Ordnance and of Greenwich Hospital, and a famous diarist; and EDWARD STRATHERN GORDON (1867), Lord Advocate of Scotland.

The Norman Bishops of Thetford were HERFAST (Chaplain to William I.), appointed in 1071, WILLIAM DE BEAUFEU in 1086, and HERBERT DE LOSINGA in 1091. The title was revived from 1535 to 1539, when JOHN SALISBURY was Suffragan Bishop, and in the reign of

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William and Mary, when GEORGE HICKES, a non-juror, a great Anglo-Saxon scholar, and the author of over forty learned works, was Bishop of Thetford. In 1894 the Rev. A. T. LLOYD was appointed by the Bishop of Norwich as Suffragan Bishop of Thetford (with residence at North Creake), and was succeeded in 1903 by the Rev. J. P. A. BOWERS.

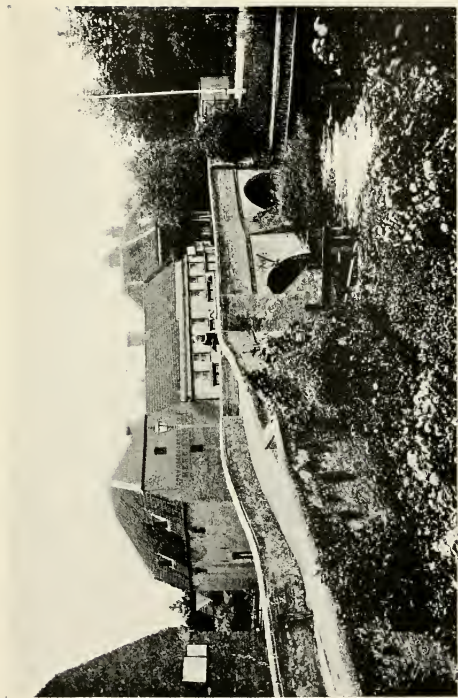
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CHAPTER IX.

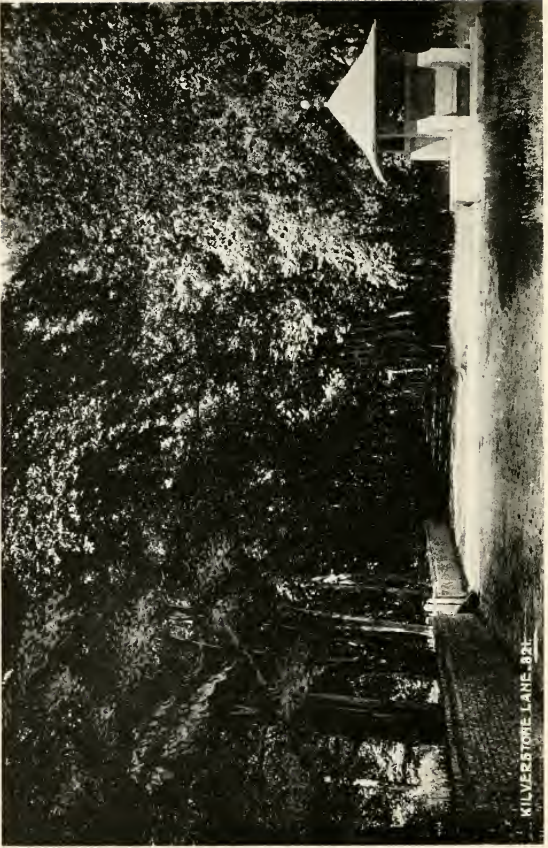
MENTIONS SOME FEATURES OF INTEREST IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

At Brandon (six miles distant) the manufacture of gunflints is still carried on, and the various processes in this unique and archaic English industry are most interesting, from the primitive method of procuring flint on Lingheath, to the "quartering," "flaking," and "knapping" in the flint-workers' sheds. There are many analogies between the methods used by Neolithic man and those of the Brandon knappers. About twenty men are engaged, and the finished gunflints are exported to Africa, America, China, and Oceania. Another peculiar industry is the dressing of hare and rabbit skins, in which over 300 persons are employed, the fur being used for the making of felt, and the shredded skins for glue and size. The Church of St. Peter is well worthy of inspection, and the ancient three-arched bridge over the Little Ouse is beloved of artists.

Many of the villages in the vicinity are very picturesque, and in all of them the churches will repay examination. Those of Brettenham, Elveden, and Kilverstone have been tastefully restored within the past few years. There are round



THE BRIDGE, BRANDON.



KILVERSTONE LANE. 821

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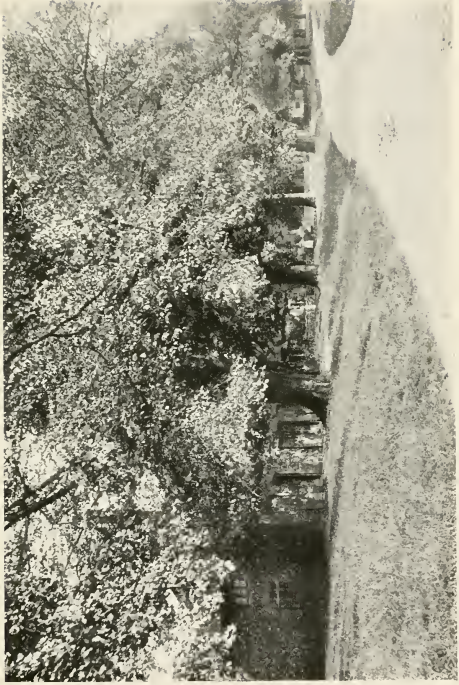
towers at Croxton and Kilverstone, and the Churches of Barnham St. Martin's, Weeting All Saints, and West Wretham St. Lawrence are in ruins. At Brettenham there is a fine Norman doorway and good stained windows ; at Croxton, fine tracery in the east window, early hammerbeam roof, Norman south doorway, and two stained windows made at West Tofts ; at Elveden, a mural monument and medallion portrait of Admiral Keppel, and an east window to the Maharajah Duleep Singh and Bamba his wife ; at Euston a reredos by Grinling Gibbons, a handsome monument (1685) to the first Earl of Arlington, many memorials to the Fitzroys, and a foundation stone with the inscription, " Isabelle, Duchesse of Grafton and Countesse of Ewston, layed this stone, 21st day of April, 1676 ; " at Kilverstone four balustrade windows and slits capped with a single stone in the tower, Norman south doorway, and many memorials to the Wright family ; at Rushford a fine tower with no opening except two arrow-slits for about fifty feet from the ground, a south porch dating from about 1350, and several memorials to the Buxtons ; at Santon Downham a fine Norman nave, an Early English chancel, a good screen, and a curious carved figure over the south doorway ; and at East Wretham a Norman south door and a well-carved font canopy.

In the time of Edward III. Sir Edmund Gonville founded the College of St. John the Evangelist at Rushford, and two sides of the quadrangle still remain, and are used as a rectory-house, the present drawing-room being part of the

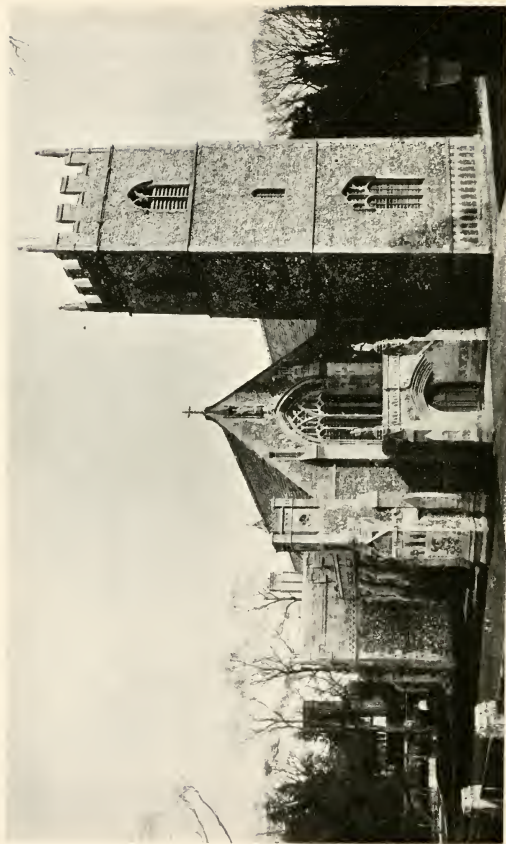
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original building. At Weeting there are remains of an Augustinian Priory founded by Sir Hugh de Plaiz in the time of King John, and a ruined castle built in the 11th century by William de Warenne, and chosen by Charles Kingsley for some of the finest scenes of "Hereward the Wake."

The associations of Elveden and Euston are of more than ordinary interest. The Elveden estate was purchased in 1768 by Augustus, Viscount Keppel, who went with Anson round the world, and subsequently took command of the Channel Fleet, became M.P., and in 1782 was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. During his occupancy Charles James Fox often visited the hall, and said Elveden was the best sporting manor for its size in England. In 1799 the sixth Earl of Albemarle was born in the old hall. He fought at Waterloo, succeeded to the title in 1851, and died in 1891. He wrote "Fifty Years of My Life," and several other works. About the time of Waterloo the estate was purchased by Mr. W. Newton, who was M.P. for Ipswich in 1819. His son, Sir Edward Newton, K.C.M.G., F.L.S., was born at Elveden Hall in 1832, and after being Colonial Secretary at Mauritius, became Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica. Another son, the late Professor Alfred Newton, F.R.S., Professor of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy at Cambridge, also spent his boyhood at Elveden. In 1863 the estate was purchased by the Maharajah Duleep Singh, G.C.S.I., the hereditary ruler of Lahore, who rebuilt the hall in the Indian style. He died at Paris in 1893, and a



EUSTON : Entrance to Village from Thetford.



ELVEDEN CHURCH, SUFFOLK.

GUIDE TO THETFORD.

stone in Elveden Churchyard is inscribed "In Memory of Duleep Singh, G.C.S.I., Maharajah of Lahore." The property was subsequently purchased by Lord Iveagh, who converted the hall into a palace, rebuilt the village, enlarged and restored the church, made new roads, and extended the estate.

Euston is a beautiful village, long associated with the Fitzroys. Queen Elizabeth was at the hall in 1578, but her host, Edward Rookwood, died in Bury Gaol, where he was imprisoned as a Recusant. The estate was purchased by the Earl of Arlington, a member of the "Cabal" Ministry, who rebuilt the hall, the church, and the bridges, and laid out the gardens, park, and ornamental water. He died and was buried at Euston in 1685. During his ownership Charles II. was a not infrequent visitor, and after his death in 1691, his devoted Queen, Catherine of Braganza, lived for a time at the hall. Her Confessor, Father Diaz, recorded in his diary that "Her Majestie lives content here with her familie; the place is very pretty, and hass all the conveniencys that wee can desire, except that there is no cows." Evelyn advised the Earl of Arlington as to the planting of trees, and perhaps it is to him that we owe the splendid cedars of Lebanon near the park-gates. In 1672 the Earl's only daughter was married to Henry Fitzroy (afterwards first Duke of Grafton), who saw naval and military service, and was killed at the siege of Cork in 1690. The third Duke was Secretary of State in 1765, First Lord of the Treasury from 1767 to 1770, and Lord Privy

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Seal in 1771, dying at Euston in 1811. The greater part of Euston Hall was destroyed by fire in 1902, but has since been rebuilt. Fortunately the priceless art treasures were saved.

Other eminent men associated with places in the district are John Eyre, the son of a Brandon draper, who was Lord Mayor of London in 1451, and built Leadenhall Market; Edmund Gonville, founder of Gonville Hall, Cambridge, who was Rector of Rushford from 1326 to 1342; Roger Long, F.R.S., who was born at Croxton Park in 1680, became a famous lecturer and writer on astronomy, Master of Pembroke Hall, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge; and Thomas Shadwell, Dramatist and Poet Laureate, who was born at Bromehill House, Weeting, in 1642.

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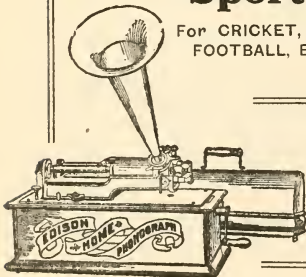
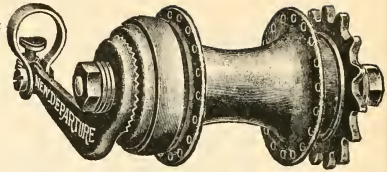
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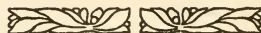
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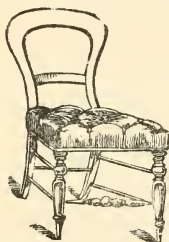
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